

AZ CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

Written by Elizabeth Burden, Southwest Folklife Alliance

GLOBE

ROCKS, MURALS AND STORIES FOR THE FUTURE

The towns of Globe and Miami are only a few miles apart but separated by more than distance. Ask residents and you'll get different reasons why, but everyone will tell you that there is a divide. People will also tell you that the communities need to work together to change the perception of Globe-Miami from somewhere that people drive through to a place where young families want to live. For the Globe Arizona Creative Communities Initiative (CCI) team of Tiera Guerena, Paul Tunis, and Al Gameros, the process of changing perceptions and uniting communities began with the rocks.

People from all walks of life in Globe-Miami had taken up a hide and seek rock game that involves painting small rocks and leaving them for others to find. Those simple, creative, spontaneous acts were the seed for the larger idea to use creative processes to engage people in conversations about people and place. "It seemed like a great way to use art and somebody's impulse to make art to show, 'We're the same. We have something to say,'" said Tunis. "Art is deceptively good at addressing community challenges. It kind of tricks people into thinking about things they wouldn't [ordinarily] think about. Art has this beautiful way of seeming harmless until it's not, and then it has this huge impact, changing the way people think about stuff."

The painted rocks idea gave rise to a documentary project, the Big Rock project, and a mural project to engage people in capturing a moment in time in their community, reflecting on who they are and how they want to be seen by others.



Photo: Rocks painted as part of Globe Rocks community art project. Photograph by Susie Baker, 2018.

In the documentary project, a team of youth conducted video interviews at random with people in the area. They asked questions such as “What do you like about Globe?” and “What is it like living here?” In the process, the youth gained new skills and found their voice in the community. They were able to share Globe-Miami through their own eyes. “I think the youth voice is important, I really do,” said Gameros. “I mean, we’re seeing that nationwide. We’re seeing the younger generation getting involved in helping to make decisions and getting involved in voting and making what our future is going to be formed from. I think working through a different generation, especially the young generation, helps us bring our community together.”



Globe youth learn about film and documentary techniques and technology.

The team also learned something new about their community. Guerená commented, “There are parts of Globe that are fascinating, special, and make it worthy of having its stories ... told.”

Tunis added, “I think that there’s a lot of really valuable perspectives in our community. I think what makes our community really strong is just how different everyone is. It is made up of so many different people with so many different walks of life.”

The interviews set the stage for the Big Rock Project, a project lead by Gameros, the mayor of Globe, who grew up in Miami. He envisions a project that will invite youth from both communities to paint their own art. “To have the mayor say ‘This is important and this is part of who we are and this is part of what makes us especially important’— it might not be apparent to the kids who are going to be making art now, but I hope that at some point that kind of clicks for them, or it gives them that sense of, like, you are this, you are Globe, you are Globe-Miami, too,” said Tunis. “That’s the feeling I want everybody to have who participates, and hopefully we get as many people as possible to participate: You are Globe-Miami and you matter.”

The Big Rock will launch the mural project, in which an artist will be selected to work with the community to design three high visibility murals that will give residents and visitors alike a sense of what Globe-Miami has to offer.

“I was born and raised here, and never really left this area. I think we take it for granted how much we do have around and how much beauty we do have in our community,” said Gameros. “We’re right in the middle of everything. People drive-by and don’t stop by. That’s what we need to change. That’s the concept we’re trying to change. We want people to want to work at the mine and live in Globe.”

Tunis added, “The project always has been about two questions of who we are. It’s the question of [who] we are to ourselves; who [and] what... makes up Globe-Miami? But also who we are to people who aren’t members of the community. It’s a real ... opportunity to tell our story to those people driving through. Because usually if you’re outside the community and somebody says they’ve been to Globe, they usually say, ‘I drive through there to somewhere else’. If that changes to, ‘Yeah, you guys have a mural...’, then that could be enough to start explaining to the State as a whole who we are, what we care about, what we value, and what it’s like to be here. And maybe they’ll want to be here, too, or at least check it out for an afternoon.”



Team Globe members Paul Tunis and Tiera Guerena plan their project.